

**PEACE and UNITY Recommended
to the CLERGY.**

A
SERMON

**PREACH'D in the
Cathedral-Church of NORWICH,**

**AT THE
PRIMARY VISITATION
Of the Right Reverend Father in God**

**THOMAS
Lord BISHOP of NORWICH,**

On MONDAY July 1st. 1723.

**By SAMUEL SHUCKFORD, M.A.
Rector of SHELTON in NORFOLK.**

Publish'd by His Lordship's Command.

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15

TO
THE RIGHT REVEREND
FATHER IN GOD
T H O M A S
Lord BISHOP of NORWICH;

This SERMON Preach'd and Publish'd
in Obedience to His LORDSHIP'S
COMMANDS, is most Humbly
Dedicated by

His LORDSHIP,

Most Dutiful

Humble Servant

S. SHUCKFORD.

TO
THE RIGHT REVEREND
FATHER IN GOD
THOMAS
Lord Bishop of NORWICH;

The same Person and Person
in Obedience to the Lordship's
Command is most humbly
Dedicated by

IN LORDSHIP

Wm. Dwyer

Humble Servant

S. SHUCKFORD.



PSALM CXXXIII. I.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in Unity.

GOD, who in Wisdom made the World, has given all Things such a Connection to, and Dependance upon one another, that the Welfare of the Universe necessarily arises from the concurrent Harmony of all its Parts. There is a Weight and Measure in all Things, which determine their mutual Proportion and Relation; and whilst They are ordered and directed according to them, They are in Harmony, or at *Unity*; and a happy Effect, and beneficial Influence arise from it.

So that *Unity* is a good and happy Thing, even in the lifeless and inanimate Part of the
A Creation.

Creation. And what is thus important in the *natural* World, is as useful in the *intellectual* World also: The Minds of Men must, in Order to promote the Happiness and Welfare of their Lives, be *drawn* into a suitable Temper and Disposition to one another by **the Cords of a Man*; as the Parts of the natural World are held together, by the Laws that are given them, in order to their preserving a proper Harmony.

It is indeed a Point somewhat difficult, to take a true Estimate of our own and other People's Spirits; and to lay down Rules, by which Communities and larger Societies may be so disposed, in all Cases, as to act in Harmony, and *be at Unity*; but 'tis very easy to see, that the Happiness of all Bodies of Men whatsoever very much depends upon every Person's truly aiming at this due and proper Temper towards other People. It is *a good and joyful Thing* for us to *dwell together in Unity*; the Comfort of our Lives, and our Welfare in the World are promoted by it; and whenever we break the *Bond of Peace*, upon whatever accounts we fall into Divisions, We experimentally know and feel, that we bring upon our selves many Evils.

* Hosea xl. 4.

Recommended to the CLERGY. 3

But I do not design to spend the Time in Reflections upon the good Effects of *Unity* in general; I shall beg leave to speak somewhat more particularly to our own Condition, and to offer, what I have to say, in the following Method.

First, I shall observe how *good and joyful*, or how useful and beneficial a Thing it would be, for Us Brethren to live at *Unity*.

Secondly, I shall consider, whence it has come to pass, that there have been such Differences and Disagreements amongst us.

And in the last Place I shall enquire by what Methods it is most likely for us, to be at *Unity*.

First, Let me observe, how happy and beneficial a Thing it would be for Us Brethren to live at *Unity*. It has certainly been very unfortunate, that *We* the Ministers of the Gospel have, for so long a Time, not been in a Condition to preach *Peace* and *Unity* to our Christian Brethren, without justly fearing that severe Reply from Them, *Physicians cure your selves*; but so it is; if we look into the Divisions of the Times, there must appear *against* us, the Contradictions, the Disputes, and the Accusations, which we

have so often brought *against* one another. It is, I am sensible, unpleasant to mention this, and I shall carry it no further; but give me leave to say, that, if *We could be at Unity*, the Joy and Pleasure, the *good and happy* Effects, that would come of it, would be the *Unity and Agreement* of all our Fellow Christians.

Whilst the Shepherds of Israel are smitten with a disputatious Temper, the Sheep will be divided; for there will be *Some for Paul*, and *Some for Apollos*, and *Some for Cephas*, in every Difference that shall arise between them; but if *We could be at Peace*, and there were no Disputes raised by us amongst our Brethren; Peace and Unity being the Natural Fruits of our Religion would very readily grow and increase in the World. The *precious Ointment* (which the *Psalmist* alludes to upon this Subject) *poured upon Aaron's Head ran down to the Skirts of his Cloathing*; such would be our *Unity*; it would not rest upon our own Heads, and terminate in our Selves; but descend from Us to our Hearers, and spread over the whole Church: and if This could be attained, I think, I need not be large in describing how happy a thing it would indeed be.

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Recommended to the CLERGY. 5

The many Mischiefs of our Disunion may be seen in a few Particulars; The Uneasiness and the Dangers of a divided Church, as well as the Disadvantage that arises from all our Divisions to true Religion are very apparent; and since *Peace* and *Unity* are a certain and effectual Cure of Them, what can be more pleasant or beneficial to us?

Peace and *Unity*, to consider them in the first View, would take away all our Uneasinesses, and give us the true Christian Fellowship with one another. Party Distrusts, Suspicions, Angers and Resentments have been too much felt to need a Description; and I believe, I shall be allowed to say, that could we bury them for ever, and entirely free our Minds from them, we should attain the greatest Happiness, which the State of any Church is capable of in this World. *Jerusalem which is above is at Peace with her Children*; and if our *Jerusalem, below* could be so too, we should enjoy one of the great Ingredients of the Happiness of Heaven: If, instead of the *Variances* and *Strifes*, *Jealousies*, and *Fears*, *Envy* and *Ill-nature*, that We have had amongst us, we could open to our selves a State of *Peace*, and *Security*, *Love*, and *Friendship*, *Harmony* and *Good-will*; and being Fellow-labourers in the same Gospel, labour in it as Men of one Heart

Heart and one Soul, what would the returning into such a State as This be (after the many Years Ruffles that are gone thro' with,) but what St. *Paul* calls the Reconciling of the Jews to the Gospel, *even Life from the Dead?* but

Secondly, It would give the truest Safety to our Church. If We examine our Constitution, we may quickly see, that there is no Church in Europe so regularly reformed as Ours is; It is established upon the best of Principles, agreeable to the Laws of Nature and Christianity, and every way qualified to support the Civil Rights of the Kingdom: and if this be true, let us but consider the Purity of our Faith, and the Learning and Labours of our *Fathers* and *Brethren*, and what can be the Reason, that such a Church should not be strictly speaking *National*, and hold in it's Communion every virtuous and good Subject? I am sensible, it would be foreign to my Purpose, to enter here into the merits of the Cause, between our Church and those that dissent from us: but if we take the slightest View of the Nature of their Scruples and Objections; if we consider the Temper of the Age we live in; and the increase of Learning and good Sense that is now in the World; it would be difficult to say where there could be any real Strength against us, if we were not one
against

Recommended to the CLERGY. 7

against another: but a Kingdom divided against a Kingdom cannot flourish, nor a House divided against a House support it's Welfare: We have confessedly had our Education in the best and clearest Learning that ever was in the World: We have committed to us a *Dispensation of the Gospel*, free from those Errors and Absurdities, which must hinder it's Progress and Reception with Mankind. We have provided for us, the happiest Opportunities of Leisure, to enable us to dispense wisely the Gospel that is committed to us; and We have had the Protection and Encouragement of the *best* of Governments, how is it that We should not greatly flourish? But alas! though *Wisdom* may at all Times be *justified of her own Children*, yet the Sons of Wisdom must act *wisely* to support their Credit with the World: We may have great Advantages in our Hands, and yet destroy the Force of them by unhappy management; We may dispute away one another's Characters, and bring a Blemish upon our common Ministry; We may make our Adversaries strong by our Weakness; We may give the common Enemy continual Opportunities; and, if it should please God not to support our Governours in that happy success of Power, by which they have hitherto preserv'd us, We may *bite and devour one another*, till *We be consumed one of another*. But

Thirdly,

Thirdly. Our Peace and Unity would promote the Interest of true Religion.

Our Blessed Saviour designed by his Religion, to purify to Himself a *peculiar People zealous of good Works*; and Christianity consists not in the Heat of our Disputes, but in the Virtue of Men's Lives, and if We look at Christianity in this View, what is *Controversy*, or what is the *Disputer of this World*?

A late excellent and truly great Prelate of our Church, has expressed This far better than I can. Speaking of the Controvertists of his Time, He says, "That instead of reforming
 "Men's Natures and governing their Actions,
 "instead of restraining their Appetites, softening
 "their Tempers, sweetening their Humours,
 "composing their Affections, and raising their
 "Minds above the Follies of this present World,
 "to the Hope and Pursuit of endless Blessed-
 "ness, They are defeating the true End, for
 "which the Son of God came into the World,
 "and doing the Work of the Powers of Dark-
 "ness: leading Men into the dry and angry
 "Work of making Parties, and settling needless
 "Opinions, and at the same Time becoming
 "slack in the great Duties, which were chief-
 "ly design'd by the Christian Doctrine.

How

Recommended to the CLERGY. 9

How far these Effects of Controversy are now visible, the Atheistical Practices and Immoralities too notorious in the World do speak very loudly: And thus it always will be, if instead of laying out our selves in charging Those, that are committed to Us, to *maintain good Works*, and to *let the Light of a Virtuous Conversation so shine before Men*, as to promote the Glory of our *Father in Heaven*, we turn our Heads and Hearts another Way, what can be the Consequence, but that the Atheist and the Infidel will make use of the Opportunity to *sow their Tares* in our Fields? Christianity cannot be made *a Sword on Earth*, but it will *thus* turn to the Disadvantage of Religion; nay, I might say, that as our Disputes do many Times puzzle Religion, and unsettle Mens Minds, and make them uncertain What to embrace and rely on; so *We* can hardly engage in them, without giving the Enemy an Opportunity of decrying the Whole of what We are so divided about in settling; and so of turning the Unwary, from *Disputing* and *Doubting*, by Degrees, to *Infidelity*.

The *Second* Thing to be consider'd was, how and by what Means We have lost our Unity. And

I fear one Cause of this Evil has been our
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being *too speculative* in Matters of Religion. God Almighty, with Whom is no Shadow of Darkness, nor any Cloud of Error, sees every Truth in the clearest Light; and so may We, when we come into the other World, and perhaps We shall not be able *there* to differ in any Matter; but This is not the Condition of our present Being; Our Powers of knowing are limited to but narrow Bounds; and if We stretch our selves beyond our Line into speculative Opinions, We shall find them to be *but* Opinions; and not be able to bring many Persons into the same Mind with our Selves about Them.

There are indeed plain and evident Truths, which can admit of no Dispute amongst reasonable Men; and the reveled Truths of Christianity are as certain as These can be, because they are founded in ** the Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power*. The Miracles that were wrought by the *Power* of God, to attest the Truth of them, are a Proof that it was *His* Spirit, that at first reveled Them; but if We go beyond These into Speculations of our own, We may be ingenious but not have Knowledge: and We may meet with Others of another Turn of Fancy as ingenious as our Selves,

* 1. Corinth. II. 4.

and yet find nothing but infinite Dispute and Contradiction.

If We look into the Religions of the Heathen World, We may see the Fruits of this Imperfection of Human Understanding; They had various Speculations, but were clear and fixed in Nothing: *Life and Immortality*, were *brought to Light by the Gospel*, but before They were so, *One of the greatest Heathens, (than Whom, No One did ever by the strength of *Reason* pursue more closely the Hope of a future State) after all the Arguments Reason could offer, after all the Byas^s He could lay upon his Mind, from a Desire of embracing so pleasing an Opinion, did at last feel the Imperfection of an Human Intellect, and confess'd that ^chowever He sometimes thought Himself convinced, yet at other Times He found Himself unaccountably sliding into various Doubtings.

God be thanked, Christianity has supply'd Us with those important Truths, which Reason could never fix to our Satisfaction. But if We would unite in the Belief of them, *This* must be our *Wisdom*, *This* our *Understanding* to know, that ^d*the secret Things* do still *belong to the Lord our God*, the

^a Cicero ^b Vid. Lib. de Senectute. ^c Tusculan. Quest. l. 1.
^d Deuter. xxix. 29.

12 PEACE and UNITY

Things that are reveled only to us and to our Children. For if We go beyond these, We shall find, that the Wit of Man in holy speculative Wars, will always be **the shower,*
“ which does Injury by falling on the Sea; In
“ other Parts of Learning It may be of Ser-
“ vice, but Religion needs not its Help, but
“ is rendered by it more tempestuous.

Secondly, *Another Cause* of our Differences and Divisions has been the different Abilities of different Men. God has been pleased not only to confine our Views, and to place Us Bounds of Knowledge, beyond which We cannot pass; but He has given such a Temperament to the Minds of different Men, that our Knowledge is not alike even in those Things where We may have Knowledge. Our Understandings are as diverse as our Palates: and though all Truth is every where the same, yet We do not All see the Force of it in the same Light: but there must perhaps be a different Representation of it, to suit it to the Apprehensions of different Men.

And That this is very often a Cause of many Warm Divisions is evidently experienced. The Disputants of former Ages seem'd to differ much about the Evil of Pain; but, I think,

* See Bishop Sprat's *History of the Royal Society* p. 25.

they

Recommended to the CLERGY. 13

they agreed in the main, though they happen'd not to see, what they aim'd at, in the same View, and so did not rightly Understand one another: And thus perhaps if We were coolly to examine the Disputes that have been amongst us, We might find that We have very often differ'd in *Terms* only, but agreed in *Reality*, and yet have so perplexed one another with our various Representations of the same Thing, as not to know it to be the same, but to maintain a very sharp Controversy about it. I could, I think, give Instances in many Points, but I shall choose a *political* one, because if *These Debates* have been of this sort, how soon might we end them?—Government was certainly design'd for the Benefit of Mankind; there are indeed in the World Schemes of Policy, to bind Nations upon Principle to Slavery and Destruction, and there are Nations that receive them; but They are People upon whom the *Light of Liberty* has not shined; and not knowing what a happy Thing *Light* is, They are contented with *Darkness*: but We *Britons* have a Sense and Experience of Better Things. 'Tis maintain'd on One Side, that We have a Right to save our Selves, our Liberties and Religion from Destruction; and the Opposers of This, in their strictest Measures of Obedience, are obliged to allow Exceptions in *Cases of Necessity*: Now if these Things are rightly stated, how

how thin is the Partition? how inconsiderable the Distinction? but yet how wide have been our Differences? how great our Divisions for the sake of it? This is certainly *One* of our Unhappineffes; We might often unite, and form many Schemes for our Comfort and Welfare; but in this manner, a confusion does often arise, and We become divided, not so much from any *real* Obscurity in the Matter, We are aiming at, as from our *different* Apprehensions of it, causing us not to relish it when we have it, unless it be set before us in our own Method.

Thirdly, *Another Cause* of our Differences and want of Unity is the Various and Different Influence of our Passions.

Were We duly to free our selves from the Influence of These, We should enquire into Things, with a greater Singleness of Heart; and in so doing, it would not be difficult to find the true and just Rule and Measure of our Actions, and to Unite in acting according to it. The Understanding of Man, though imperfect, gives us Light enough to do our Duties, but the Passions of our Hearts do often turn our Minds another Way: *From whence come Wars and Fightings* said the Apostle (I might say, *whence* our Differences, *whence* our Divisions?) *come They not hence even of our Lusts?* "the
"Lust

Recommended to the CLERGY. 15

"*Lust* of Riches, which is Covetousness; the
"*Lust* of Power and Greatness, which is Ambition", or a Spirit of Envy and Contradiction; the most fatal *Lust* of all, the very Height of Pride. These are the Things that trouble Kingdoms and disturb the World. I am sure it would be easy to take a View of the unhappy Affairs that have been amongst us, and to shew, that not half our Differences have arisen from the Imperfections of our Knowledge, or mistaken Principles, but from the Corruption of Mens Hearts; for what can be "*the Principle of distinguishing one another by odious Names* invented not for Peace, but to raise a *Party*; and of framing our *Opinions* of both *Men* and *Things*, according as we happen to think them to be or not to be on our Side?—but let Us not enter this Scene; it is a very unpleasant one—Your own Thoughts will suggest here Matter enough—but for Peace sake let us pass from it.

The Third and *Last Point* to be considered, was how and by what Means we may obtain an Unity.

And as to our different Speculations in Religion, We are by the Imperfection of our Natures so fram'd, that we shall certainly have many Differences in Things; but God has not there-

therefore given us a Spirit of Division: We have a Principle in our Power sufficient for this Infirmary to prevent all the Evils that may arise from it: We may differ in our Notions, but still we may, if we please, *love and forbear one another*; and if We cannot attain an Unity of Opinion, yet we may preserve an *Unity of Temper and Spirit*, by the *Bond of Peace*. And let not the heated Minds of Disputatious Men think This an Attainment too great to be hoped for, for wise and good Heathens have attain'd to it. *Cicero*, speaking somewhere of a Difference of Opinion between himself and *Cato*, uses Words to this Purpose, that "He so differ'd from him, that though they were divided in Judgment, they continued united in Love and Friendship." The Evils of Strife may be prevented if we please, We might encrease one anothers Knowledge, and peradventure bring our Selves to an Agreement in the Truth, by amicable Debates about it; or at least We should remember that *We are Brethren*, travelling, and conducting other Persons to the same Home, and resolve not to become Enemies to one another by the Way. Or if we find it the peculiar Unhappiness of our Tempers, not to be thus minded; then how ought We to consider that We are not fit for Controversy, nor Controversy proper and expedient for Us? And God be thanked, our Faith does not stand in this

this *Wisdom of Man*. Christianity does not consist in Points of Controversy and Dispute; and We may, if We please, lay aside our Contentions by that happy method, which the Apostle took to end the Divisions of the Church of *Corinth*, by *determining not to know any Thing, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified*; I mean, by determining to bestow Our Pains upon no other Points than those *necessary Truths* of the Christian Religion, which We must teach Those that are under our Care, in order to Their being saved.

The Providence of God has placed Us *private* Men in happy and quiet Stations, if We know how to be happy and quiet in Them. We are not to govern the Church; to settle Articles of Faith; or to censure Heresies: Why should We affect a Concern in difficult Matters, that lye out of our Province? We may *take Heed* to those little *Flocks*, over which the *Holy-Ghost* has made us *Overseers*; We may be *instant* with them in *Season* and out of *Season* to instruct them in their Duties; We may constantly *charge* them to *maintain* all those *good Works* which are *profitable* to them; In a Word, We may *make ready* a *People prepared for the Lord*; and for so doing, secure to our Selves, *when the chief Shepherd shall*

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18 PEACE and UNITY

*shall appear, that * never Fading Crown; and all this by such a Preaching of the Gospel, as shall in all the Parts of it, be, I might say, a continual Labour of Love, free from all the Disputes, Questions, Strivings and Contentions, which considering the little Good that have come of them (not to speak of the Evil that have arisen from them,) are at best but Unprofitable and Vain.*

And as to the Divisions about other Matters, as to the unhappy Factions that are raised from Mens Prejudices, Passions, and *Party Spirit*; if any of These should be found amongst Us they would be intolerable; and the only Way to Peace and Unity would be to root them out. Our Profession *sets Us on an Hill*, and Our Behaviour *cannot be hid*; As *We* are Examples to our Flocks, so Our Governours have thought fit to require the most sacred Engagements of Our Fidelity; and if there have been a *Few* that have not kept a clear Character in these Points, the Iniquity appears in *Us* so remarkably odious, that a *Few* seem a *Multitude*, and bring Aspersions on the whole Order. And how have the Enemies of the Truth glory'd, because they pretend to find some of *Us* that *hold the Truth in this Unrighteousness*?— *For our Brethren and Companions sake* therefore, yea be-

* 1 Peter, V. 4.

cause

Recommended to the CLERGY 19

cause of the House of the Lord our God; for the Honour of our Religion; for the Glory of our Church, Let Us unite to put to silence the Insinuations of these Men: God Almighty has by a great many Interpositions of a distinguished Providence set a PRINCE upon the Throne, Who is every way disposed to make Us happy; And I might justly say, the Public Affairs are committed to Those, in whose Hands They never yet miscarried. Whence then? or What is that froward Spirit that reigns round about Us? Let Us teach and admonish our People to obey their Governors, and to learn to live quiet and peaceable Lives under them in all Godliness and Honesty: Let Us discourage as much as in Us lies all Faction and Sedition; silence the Clamours of uneasy Spirits; discountenance the Misreports, of those Affairs, which the Men that censure, may often be known not to have examined: Let Us not study Excuses for the Enemies of our Country; nor labour to decry the proper Measures that are taken for our Safety and Protection; but in a Word, Let Us use the Influence We have, to make those under our Care, good and faithful Subjects, and a quiet and united People; and so shew, that We are not, as we are slanderously reported, Usurpers upon the Rights, and Enemies to the Liberties of Mankind;

20 **PEACE and UNITY, &c.**

but that Our most *holy* Religion, Our *Excellent* Church, the *Order* We are called to in It, and Our own Temper and Inclination do all conspire to induce Us to promote the *Glory* of God, by endeavouring to preserve, *as much as in Us lies*, the *Public Peace* and *Happiness of Men*.



THE END.

